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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Fifty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 17 May 2004 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

In blatant violation and grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other provisions of international law, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to wantonly destroy Palestinian homes and properties in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Over the past several days, the occupying Power has escalated this unlawful and inhumane practice, deliberately causing excessive and widespread destruction, in particular in the Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

Using armoured bulldozers and tanks, the Israeli occupying forces repeatedly raided the Rafah refugee camp, terrorizing the civilian population and destroying dozens of homes, some of them attacked while the families were still inside. As you are likely aware, United Nations officials on the ground are reporting that in the past few days at least 88 homes have been completely destroyed in Rafah, and some estimates have put the toll of destruction even higher, at approximately 120 homes that have been destroyed and made unliveable. As a result of this onslaught, more than 1,100 Palestinian civilians, including women and children, have been made homeless. These families, many of whom have lived in the refugee camp for more than a half-century since they became refugees and many of whom are second- and third- generation refugees, have been displaced and dispossessed once again, their homes, belongings, community and lives in ruins.

As the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) sets up tents to shelter the displaced, the images are tragically reminiscent of the onset of the plight of the Palestine refugees more than 56 years ago. Indeed, UNRWA has been unable to keep pace with the vast destruction being inflicted by the occupying Power on the Palestinian civilian population. It has been unable to provide adequate shelter to house all those who have been displaced and is actually still trying to repair and rebuild the thousands of refugee homes damaged or destroyed by the Israeli occupying forces over the past three years, while being now faced with even more destruction and displacement. In fact, some of the homes

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destroyed incurred this wrath of the occupying forces for the second time in less than a year and half.

The Rafah refugee camp has in fact been severely targeted by the Israeli occupying forces since they began their military campaign against the Palestinian people in September 2000. According to UNRWA, since September 2000, more than 11,000 Palestinians have been uprooted and displaced from the Rafah refugee camp alone and more than 1,200 homes in the camp, not including those destroyed in recent days, have been demolished or severely damaged. In addition to the material losses, Rafah has not been spared human losses. Since September 2000, more than 257 Palestinians, including at least 58 children, have been killed by the occupying forces in Rafah and thousands more injured, and the casualties continue to mount as Israel continues to carry out military attacks against Palestinian civilians in Rafah as well as throughout the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

At this time, hundreds more Palestinians are now fleeing their homes in Rafah as Israel threatens to destroy even more homes. Israeli officials, including Defence Minister Mofaz and Army Chief of Staff Ya'alon, have declared their intention to destroy hundreds more Palestinian homes in the Rafah area. As Mr. Ya'alon declared yesterday: "Hundreds of Palestinian houses along the Israel-Egypt border have been targeted for demolition." Such measures have been carried out repeatedly by the occupying forces in the Rafah area along the northern edge of the border between Gaza and Egypt and it is now clear that these actions have been taken for the purpose of widening the so-called Philadelphi buffer zone along the border with Egypt, over which Israel seeks to retain control.

This illegal collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population in Rafah by the occupying Power for such unlawful purposes must cease. The international community, including the Security Council, must take the necessary measures to compel Israel to cease its ongoing violations and war crimes against the Palestinian people, including a cessation of the plans to demolish more homes in Rafah, and to compel it to uphold its obligations as an occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention and to abide by all other relevant provisions of international law. Only such urgent action by the international community can stem the rising toll of death and destruction being inflicted by Israel on the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 189 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 12 May 2004 (A/ES-10/266-S/2004/382), constitute a basic record of the crimes committed by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of the war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

Accordingly, in follow-up to the above-mentioned letters, it is my profound regret to inform you that, since our last letter to you just five days ago (A/ES-10/266-S/2004/382), at least 21 Palestinians, including children, have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces, raising the total number of martyrs killed

since September 2000 to 2,984 Palestinians. (The names of the martyrs that have been identified are contained in the annex to the present letter.)

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nasser **Al-Kidwa**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

Annex to the identical letters dated 17 May 2004 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Names of martyrs killed by the Israeli occupying forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem* (Thursday, 13 May 2004, to Monday, 17 May 2004)

Thursday, 13 May 2004

1. Ihab Jamal Yussef
2. Mohammed Azmi Al-Bouji
3. Hani Mohammed Al-Mughyar
4. Ramez Jamal Abu Ghali
5. Fuad Khaled Abu Hachem
6. Hassan Khudr Awajeh
7. Smeh Yussef Abu Jazar
8. Mohammed Moussa Mowafi (15 years old)
9. Ramzy Ismail Slah
10. Hamed Fayez Abu Hamrah (17 years old)
11. Ahmed Mohammed Khalil Yaqoub
12. Mahmoud Jamal Al-Siksik
13. Unknown

Friday, 14 May 2004

1. Mahmoud Saadi Joumaa'
2. Akram Abdel Kerim Abu Al-Najja
3. Ashraf Hassan Abdel Hady Quishteh

Saturday, 15 May 2004

Fuad Mohammed Abu Shabaan (from wounds sustained on 12 May 2004)

Sunday, 16 May 2004

1. Abdel Aziz Ghazi Al-Kilany
2. Ibrahim Shafiq Shahin
3. Saad Ibrahim Al Sawarkeh

Monday, 17 May 2004

Mohammed Shihadeh Mohamed Hamed

* The total number of Palestinian martyrs killed by Israeli occupying forces since 28 September 2000 is 2,984.